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July 12, 2024

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Sean Mahar  
Interim Commissioner  
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation  
625 Broadway, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Albany, NY. 12233-1010

**Re: Removal of Debar Lodge Structures**

Dear Commissioner Mahar:

It is long past time for DEC to remove the unconstitutional buildings on the State Forest Preserve located near Debar Pond. The Debar Lodge and the other 20 or so buildings in the complex are in complete disrepair. They should be removed and the site reforested. Active restoration and tree planting would help to speed the process. Once the site has been restored and reclaimed to a wild forest setting, it will be a low-maintenance location for DEC and Debar Pond can continue to be used by campers, hikers and paddlers who will cherish this wild place for generations. The natural setting of the Debar Pond site is stunning, with many towering 100-foot-tall white pines, and relatively easy access to a beautiful Adirondack lake. If you haven't made a site visit there yet, you should try to do so this summer.

There is no financial or legal justification for keeping these buildings on the Forest Preserve. Allowing the Debar structures, constructed by private landowners prior to the State acquiring the land, to remain standing and preventing forest regrowth is inconsistent with Article 14's mandate to keep the Forest Preserve "Forever Wild," and also violates the State Land Master Plan's requirement that non-conforming structures and uses be removed.

The Debar buildings should have been removed in 2004 after expiration of the stipulation allowing private use of the 25 acres encompassing Debar Lodge. According to the draft Unit Management Plan for the Debar Lodge site, at the time that the property was sold to the State in 1979, "DEC staff stated their intent to demolish the remaining structures following the expiration of the exclusive use reservation". The State Land Master Plan requires removal of non-conforming structures and uses by the end of the third year after classification. Thus, the removal of the buildings should have happened in the

**Protect the Adirondacks**

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2000's as DEC staff in 1979 stated would happen. In any event, we ask that the buildings finally be removed, as soon as possible.

We understand that there are intense pressures on the State to invest in protecting more lands in the Adirondacks through fee acquisition and conservation easements, and that there are great needs for DEC to construct and maintain high quality hiking trails that provide the public with access to the Forest Preserve. Despite these competing priorities, DEC has an obligation to manage the Forest Preserve in a way that complies with the Constitution and the State Land Master Plan. DEC must dismantle the lodge building and remove it and the other buildings from the Forest Preserve.

Finally, we urge you to take emergency action to remove and clean up the collapsed boathouse on the shore of Debar Pond before it becomes a worse environmental mess and public safety hazard than it already is. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Claudia K. Braymer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Claudia K. Braymer  
Deputy Director

cc:

Katie Stone Petronis, DEC Deputy Commissioner Natural Resources  
Joseph Zalewski, DEC Region 5 Director  
Tom Berkman, Esq., DEC General Counsel  
Molly Breslin, Esq., DEC Office of General Counsel  
Fiona Watt, DEC Director Division of Lands and Forests